

BEFORE THE
POSTAL REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20268-0001

ANNUAL COMPLIANCE REVIEW, 2021

Docket No. ACR2021

**RESPONSES OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE TO
QUESTIONS 1-3 OF CHAIRMAN'S INFORMATION REQUEST NO. 12**

The United States Postal Service hereby provides its responses to the above-listed questions of Chairman's Information Request No. 12, issued on February 7, 2022. Each question is stated verbatim and followed by the response.

Respectfully submitted,

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

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February 14, 2022

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1. The Postal Service recently launched its official podcast called Mailin' It!¹
 - a. Please list the channels or applications where the public may listen to the podcast, such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts, etc.
 - b. Please describe customer reception of the podcast. In the response, please explain how the Postal Service has been monitoring reception to podcast episodes.
 - c. Please explain how the Postal Service is advertising the podcast or letting the public know it is available.
 - d. Please explain how the Postal Service chooses subjects of each episode, and how many episodes the Postal Service plans to release.
 - e. Please describe the criteria the Postal Service will use to evaluate the success of the podcast.²
 - f. Please describe any future initiatives or plans to reach the consumer online, on social media, or the digital space.

RESPONSE:

- a. The Postal Service's podcast called "*Mailin' It!*" is available on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcast, and Spotify. Seventy-five percent of the Postal Service's public listeners access the episodes through one of these three platforms. There are other aggregator services which scrape the content and make it available on additional platforms. Instagram App, Pocket Casts, Overcast, and Facebook are the top four examples of these distribution services. However, Apple, Google, and Spotify are the only providers that the Postal Service has signed distribution agreements with for its podcast at this time.

¹ <https://usps-mailin-it.simplecast.com/>.

² For example, these criteria could include the number of people listening to the podcast each week.

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b. The Postal Service measures customer reception to “*Mailin’ It!*” in two ways: (1) by using analytics provided by the hosting service (Simplecast), and (2) by evaluating reviews by listeners posted to the platforms. The reviews by listeners vary slightly by platform. Using Apple Podcast as the best example, because it has by far the most listener subscriptions through its service and the most reviews (116), “*Mailin’ It!*” currently has a rating of 3.7 stars (out of 5) on Apple Podcast.

Analytics provided by the Simplecast hosting platform provide detailed quantitative data on listeners in aggregate and broken down by episode over time, platform, geographic location, device, length of average listen, etc. This provides the Postal Service with the most in-depth documentation of listenership, allows the podcast’s producers to compare which content performs better, and provides the Postal Service with documentation about the effectiveness of various promotional efforts.

The Postal Service also monitors Chartable Digest – a free service that ranks the “*Mailin’ It!*” podcast on a week-by-week basis, comparing it against the other podcasts in the government categories. “*Mailin’ It!*” has peaked at #1 in the government category, and averages around #8 since its launch on September 28, 2021.

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c. The Postal Service has promoted "Mailin' It!" to the public in several ways. The official USPS.com Newsroom³ lists the podcast episodes at the top of the page. The Postal Service also promotes the podcast in The Eagle – the official USPS magazine – in both the print and digital editions. Additionally, the Postal Service promoted specific episodes to the 43 Million users of Informed Delivery as ride-along content. Moreover, the Postal Service promoted episodes as part of a target paid social strategy approach. Lastly, the Postal Service promoted episodes organically on the Postal Service's official social media accounts – Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

d. The Postal Service's Corporate Communications develops episode topics with input from several groups as well as external consultants that are already under contract with the Postal Service. Specific decisions about which topics become episodes are made by the Director, Digital Communications in consultation with staff. At the macro level, the strategy is to develop episodes that fall in one of three categories: Postal History, Service and organizational developments/changes, and "Behind the Scenes" information.

Currently, the Postal Service has not established a "target number" for the number of episodes that it plans to release of the "*Mailin' It!*" podcast. As of February 10, 2022, the Postal Service recorded 12 episodes, with more in development. The Postal Service does not plan to discontinue this podcast. The

³ See <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/>.

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established schedule calls for a new episode to launch every two weeks. This will require developing 26 episodes per year.

e. The metrics that the Postal Service uses to evaluate the success of the “*Mailin’ It!*” podcast are the number of downloads and listener reviews. To date, other than some paid promotion of the episodes, the growth of the podcast has been mostly organic. The podcast has surpassed 69,000 listens (as of February 10, 2022) since the September 28, 2021 series launch. This data shows the podcast is gaining audience with every new episode. Additionally, as discussed in response to part b. of this question 1, listener reviews are above average. In addition to positive reviews from the general public, Postal Service employee engagement in the podcast is also strong. Besides receiving suggestions from employees for various topics, data indicates that Postal Service employees have listened to the podcast over 6,000 times through the internal Blue network, where the podcast is hosted. The Postal Service also promotes the podcast to employees internally through *Link*, the Postal Service’s daily news and information online service.

f. The Postal Service intends to continue to build on the strength of its current communications vehicles. For instance, the Postal Service hosts multiple social platforms on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Additionally, the Postal Service hosts a YouTube Channel, which has a number of video workstreams organized by topic. The Postal Service also has a robust

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communications platform on USPS.com, which communicates a multitude of information on initiatives such as the Postal Service's 10-Year Strategic Plan, entitled *Delivering for America: Our Vision and Ten-Year Plan to Achieve Financial Sustainability and Service Excellence*, COVID-19-related items, and election mail processes and procedures for both voters and election officials.

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2. The Postal Service explains that customer satisfaction with Market Dominant products declined in FY 2021 for residential and small/medium business customers because “[t]he COVID-19 pandemic had profound impacts on the Postal Service and its customers. Residential customers relied on package delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, and volume of traditional letter and flat services declined.” FY 2021 ACR at 77. Please explain why and how the COVID-19 pandemic increased reliance on package delivery, and decreased demand for letters and flats caused declines in customer satisfaction with Market Dominant products for residential and small/medium businesses, but not large businesses.

RESPONSE:

In its FY 2021 Annual Compliance Report the Postal Service noted that “the lingering impacts of the pandemic make a comparison of satisfaction scored between years difficult.”⁴ Additionally, the drivers of satisfaction can differ among the customer segments measured, so an increased reliance on package delivery and decreased demand for letters and flats may only partially explain the declines in customer satisfaction with Market Dominant products for residential customers and small/medium businesses. The survey responses do not provide the type of specific details necessary for a clear-cut explanation as to why these segments have lagged in customer satisfaction rates. However, historically, large businesses tend to express higher levels of satisfaction with Market Dominant products and services than smaller businesses. Larger businesses have more resources available that allow them to adjust their mail

⁴ United States Postal Service FY 2021 Annual Compliance Report, Docket No. ACR2021 (December 29, 2021), at 77.

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entry and preparation in ways that could minimize the impact of service performance issues. For instance, through the Post Office Redirect service, Caller Service customers can redirect their Post Office Box mail from one location to another. A larger business with multiple Post Office Boxes would be able to take advantage of this and potentially mitigate service performance issues at a certain location, but a smaller business with only one Post Office Box would not be able to pivot as easily. Ultimately, however, the Postal Service's continued efforts to improve predictability and reliability of its services will increase customer satisfaction at all levels. Precision in the Postal Service's operating network will drive increased efficiencies and translate into stabilized costs and greater price predictabilities as well as increase service reliability.

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3. Please describe specific actions, plans, initiatives, or strategies for improving residential and small/medium business customer satisfaction with Market Dominant products in FY 2022. In the response, for each customer type (residential and small/medium business):
- a. Please describe specific actions the Postal Service plans to take to improve customer satisfaction with Market Dominant products.
 - b. Please explain how these actions are targeted or tailored to improve customer satisfaction with Market Dominant products for that customer type.

RESPONSE:

a. The Postal Service hired more than 40,000 additional seasonal workers to help ensure that some of the service performance problems that caused customer satisfaction to decrease in FY2021 and impacted performance during the peak season were not repeated in FY2022. In addition to the extra seasonal hiring, the Postal Service is also in the process of expanding its Connect Local offering to include a Market Dominant version, Connect Local Mail, that will include same-day/next-day local document delivery. This experimental product, which the Postal Service began to offer in January through a market test in Texas, will be available in major eastern cities starting in February 2022 and nationwide starting in September 2022. This new experimental product will offer an affordable option in the expedited delivery market.

Small/Medium Businesses: The Postal Service continues to work closely with small and medium businesses at Postal Customer Council events, including

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through workshops focused on how to mail and ship effectively and meetings focused on new and enhanced product offerings. This information increases the mail's visibility and use in local markets. The Postal Service also continues to make the Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM) retail tool user friendly which makes mailing to local consumers more intuitive and simpler for local businesses. Additionally, the Postal Service will be offering a Connect Local Mail market test to accompany the Connect Local (packages) rollout, which will make mailing local documents easier and faster.

Residential: The Postal Service continues to make enhancements to Informed Delivery to provide an even more useful free service to individual recipients of mail. Some of the efforts to increase satisfaction for business mailers will also have a positive effect of satisfaction for residential customers by making mail more targeted and valuable for individuals (Connect Local, etc.).

b. Improvements to service performance should result in better customer service for all customer types, but especially for residential and small/medium businesses who were unable to adjust to circumvent geographic areas with poorer service performance scores. For residential customers, the Postal Service's improvements and enhancements to Informed Delivery are expected to lead to higher customer satisfaction scores. For small/medium businesses, the Postal Service's improvements to the EDDM retail tool as well as new delivery

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options for Connect Local Mail should lead to higher customer satisfaction scores.